

# Wolf Update



NW ROCKIES

Status of Grey Wolf Recovery  
Week of July 21 - July 28, 2000

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This report is brought to you through the joint efforts of Wolf Recovery Foundation and Gray Wolf Recovery Coordinator of USFW. If you know of someone who would like to receive the Gray Wolf Progress Report Updates, they may subscribe at Wolf Recovery Foundation site - <http://www.forwolves.org> under the Wolves section, then the reports area. In order to protect the privacy of all who receive this update, if you forward it to another group, please use the BCC option in your e-mailer. Thank You.

The Service's weekly wolf report can now be viewed at the Service's Region 6 web site at <http://www.r6.fws.gov/wolf> in addition to the regular distribution.

## MONITORING

Denning packs in the Yellowstone, central Idaho, and NW Montana are moving more widely. See the 1999 annual report "<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/wolf/annualrpt99/>" for a map of those pack locations and home ranges.

Boyd conducted a wolf flight on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and found the missing relocated alpha pair from the Twin Peaks pack that were last located in April along the Selway River in central Idaho. B18 and B35 were about 1 mile apart about 10 miles south of Anaconda, MT. The female was pregnant when relocated and we suspect, but have not confirmed, she has a litter. Diane also found relocated wolves B-63 (20 mi SW of Anaconda) and B86 (10 mi SW Wisdom).

The Nez Perce field crew found wolf B-48, a former dispersing Kelly Creek wolf with a mate and multiple pups in the St. Joe drainage of Idaho (southeast of Coeur D'Alene). Another potential breeding pair in Idaho. Tribal biologists also confirmed the lone relocated female from the former Whitecloud pack is raising several pups near Lost Trail Pass along the Montana/Idaho border.

Please report wolf sightings but especially reports in localized areas or reports of wolves "barking" when people are near to help us locate any new wolf dens. Thanks to those who have been forwarding us reports it has helped locate several potential new packs. When we are this close to 30 breeding pair documenting each wolf pack becomes very important.

## CONTROL

A guard dog was killed and eaten by the Chief Joe pack in the Tom Miner Basin, MT on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The dog's carcass was found within a few hundred yards of the house. The owner heard the dogs barking the night before, which was not usual. This ranch has lost 4 guard dogs to this pack so far and this is the second one killed this year. They have 3 Great Pyrenees left. The Defenders of Wildlife helped the ranch purchase these additional guard dogs, after their first dogs and some sheep were killed by wolves, but it appears that at least part of the pack's attraction to this ranch is now the dogs. The wolves seem to feel the urge to intimidate or attack the dogs when in the vicinity, probably as part of their regular territorial defense swing through "their" home range. Three of 4 radioed wolves were located behind

the ranch that evening. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Bangs, Volunteer Daly Sheldon met Kerry Murphy to try and locate the pack and if possible harass them out of that area. No radio signals were picked up and the pack was suspected of going back to their rendezvous site in Yellowstone Park. A flight on the 27<sup>th</sup> found the alpha male was back there but the other 3 radioed wolves were back in Tom Miner Basin and near where the dog was killed. The rancher reported that wolves were coming into the yard every night, apparently searching for the remaining guard dogs- which were being kept inside. On the night of the 27<sup>th</sup> and morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> biologists from the Service (Sheldon) and the Turner Endangered Species Fund (Val Asher) camped in the area trying to harass the wolves from the area using bean-bag shotgun shells if the wolves could be spotlighted or approached closely. The wolves never got that close but there was howling from may have been pups. The 3 radioed wolves left that area about 3am and only the yearling female remained in the vicinity. The situation is being monitored.

## RESEARCH

The alpha female (#16) of the Sheep Mountain pack died on July 19<sup>th</sup>. The necropsy indicated she died from capture related causes. The combination of this individual wolf's sensitivity, drugging, and particularly overheating during her capture apparently caused the liver and kidney damage that ultimately killed her. There was no evidence a preexisting condition was just triggered by capture. A post-capture briefing was conducted to look at better ways such captures could be conducted in the future to reduce the chances of this type of unfortunate accident from happening again.

## INFORMATION & EDUCATION, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

**Two important personnel changes-** The Wolf Recovery Program in Idaho has undergone some recent changes in Service personnel.

**Leaving-** Roy Heberger the Service's Idaho Wolf Recovery Coordinator retired on July 2. Roy did an outstanding job for wolves and for local residents in Idaho. Roy was a "people person" and worked hard at interacting with a wide variety of interest groups to find positive solutions to difficult problems. During his retirement party on July 14<sup>th</sup> in Boise, Roy earned the Meritorious Service Award from the Secretary of the Interior for his work on wolf issues in Idaho. Roy did a great job and will be missed. Thanks Roy for a job well done!!

**Arriving-** Roy's replacement has just been announced and should be on board in late August. USDA Wildlife Services Wolf Specialist Carter Niemeyer was selected to take Roy's place as the Idaho Wolf Recovery Coordinator and should report for his new duties around September 12. Carter was the point person for WS on all wolf issues since 1991. He was a core team member during preparation of the reintroduction EIS, a key field person during the actual reintroduction, and has represented WS on nearly all wolf issues, including control and aversive conditioning. In 1997, Carter received the alpha award for his efforts on behalf of wolf recovery from the Wolf Education and Research Center. Carter, will be missed by Wildlife Services but, Welcome to the US Fish and Wildlife Service!!

## NATIONAL WOLF RECLASSIFICATION PROPOSED

On July 11, the Service announced a nation-wide proposal to reclassify the gray wolf. The proposal recommends changing the status of the grey wolf throughout most the lower 48 states. The gray wolf is currently listed as endangered everywhere but Minnesota and within the experimental population areas in MT, ID, WY and AZ, NM. The proposal will recommend not changing anything in the experimental population areas, downlisting the wolf to threatened status (where they will be managed with more flexible regulations than is allowed under endangered status), throughout most of their current or potential range, and removing the gray from the endangered species list where their presence will always be highly un-

likely (about 30 states). The proposed rules for managing wolves listed as threatened are also be discussed in detail in the proposal (in the west they are very similar to what is currently allowed in the Yellowstone and central Idaho experimental population areas). The complete information and the proposal can be accessed at "<http://midwest.fws.gov/wolf>". There will be a 120 day public comment period, including informational meetings (likely in August) and hearings (likely in October) in various parts of the country. The date, time and location of those meetings will be announced shortly. Anyone wanting to be placed on the Service's mailing list should write to US Fish and Wildlife Service, Gray Wolf Review, 1 Federal Dr., Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056 or use the "<mailto:graywolfmail@fws.gov>" email address or phone 612-713-7337. A decision is unlikely until a year from now approximately in July 2001. All comments on the proposal should be sent to "<mailto:graywolfcomments@fws.gov>."

Public meetings on the wolf reclassification proposal are being scheduled. Meeting will be held in late August and early September in Denver and Grand Junction , CO; Salt Lake City, UT; Helena, Kalispell, Missoula, and Bozeman, MT; and Casper, WY. Additional meeting will be held in Spokane and Everett, WA; Idaho Falls, and Boise, ID; Portland and LaGrange, OR. The informational meetings will be held from 1-3PM and 6-8PM. The same presentation will be given every halfhour. Questions will be answered but oral public comment will not be recorded. Once the schedule is finalized the meeting locations and other information about them will be widely publicized. Hearings (oral comment recorded) on the proposal, which will be fewer in number, will be scheduled in October. Public comments can be submitted by mail, email, or during hearings but all comments will receive the same importance when analyzed this winter.

Tom Meier talked with a class of about 15 people at the Glacier Institute on the 24<sup>th</sup>. **Tom Meier has a new phone number in Kalispell, MT. Tom is responsible for wolf issues in NW MT and can be reached at (406)751-4581.**

Boyd spent several days visiting with landowners in SW Montana about the wolves that are beginning to colonize that area.

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